

COLLECTING DIURNAL LEPIDOPTERA IN THE LESSER ANTILLES

During March and April of 1959 we visited Tobago and Barbados in the British West Indies and St. Croix and St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands, collecting for about a week on each island. The returns were good, although extremely dry conditions prevailed and the trade winds blew with more than their usual velocity. The battering from the strong winds had damaged some specimens badly.

The small island of Tobago in the southern Caribbean, lies twenty-five miles northeast of Trinidad. It is 116 square miles in area and its highest point, 1500 feet above sea level, is situated on the main ridge of the Forest Reserve near the northern end of the island. There are no roads to this high point and I was unable to reach it but did get to the town of Mariah, which is at 1000 feet. Most of my collecting in Tobago was done at the extensive Botanical Gardens situated on Patience Hill, 100 feet above sea level, in a moist area at the southern end of the island. The more humid air and a greater variety food plants helped to bring out a number of varieties of Papilionidea and a limited number of Hesperioidea. Among the specimens collected in these gardens and now in the collection of the American Museum of Natural History are: *Eurema venusta*, Boisduval, *Eurema gratio*sa Doubleday and Hewitson, *Cystineura* sp. and *Junonia* sp., *Thecla bubastus ponce* Comstock and Huntington, *Thecla spurina* Hewitson, *Leptotes cassino cassius* Cramer, *Hylaphela phleus* Drury. The catch of Hesperioidea was limited on this island and only those netted in the bright sunny fields near the town of Plymouth were in good condition. The specimens listed above are the first from this locality to be received by the Museum. In addition to these I caught about fifty assorted specimens common to this area in the families Danaiidae, Satyridae and Papilionidae.

Barbados is about 250 miles northeast of Tobago. It is 116 square miles in area with its highest point at Mt. Hillaby, 1104 feet above sea level. We traveled this small island extensively and noted a great scarcity of Hesperioidea. I sighted what I believe was *Urbanus proteus* Linnaeus or possibly *Urbanus*

dorantes Stoll, but was unable to net the specimens. Among the specimens I did net which, I am told, are the first from Barbados in the collection of the American Museum of Natural History, are the following: *Pheobis sennae* Linnaeus, *Ascia monuste* Linnaeus, *Thecla* sp. (*beon-cecrops* complex), *Hemiargus hanno watsoni* Comstock and Huntington, *Hylephila phleus* Drury.

The island of St. Croix is about sixty miles southeast of Puerto Rico and is the largest of the Virgin Islands. It is 25 miles long and about seven miles wide. We ran into very poor conditions on St. Croix. It was extremely hot and dry, which it rarely is in early April. A great many Lepidoptera inhabit this island but they are most difficult to find and net. The U.S. Department of Agriculture Station is at Garden Grove. Mr. Miskimen, the Station Entomologist, showed me his extensive collections and files pertaining to local Lepidoptera. These showed that this island is the home of all the more common sub-tropical species. The best hunting is in the vicinity of Mahogany Road. Fairly high and usually damp, it starts on the western end of St. Croix not far from Frederikstad. My limited catch included about fifty specimens, mostly Pieridae and Lycaenidae of about twenty different species.

At St. Thomas the collecting was much better. Here I netted a great many Heliconiidae, among them the Zebra, *Heliconius charitonius* Linnaeus and Julia, and *Dryas julia* Fabricius. Due partly to the profusion of Hibiscus and other malvaceous shrubs and trees, there were a great many of the Zebras as well as the Danaidae, *Danaus plexipus* Linnaeus and *Danaus glippus bernice* Cramer.

Many of the small islands of the Caribbean are a Lepidopterist's paradise, but the fauna of these islands should be investigated as soon as possible, while they are in their present state. There has been a great deal of spraying of DDT and other insecticides in the Caribbean islands in recent years. The inevitable changes brought about by progress will soon be fully upon these beautiful areas, changing them to over-run tourist meccas.—RAYMOND BRUSH, *New York*.